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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CONSULAR AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON

2397

EXCISE

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Assistant Secretary Barbara M. Watson, CA
James Schollaert, Staff Member, House
International Relations Committee
Hume Horan, Deputy Assistant Secretary, CA

TIME: 12:30 p.m., January 22, 1979

PLACE: International Club

SUBJECT: Jonestown

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY *[Signature]*

DATE 2/27/81

PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

Mr. Schollaert began lunch with Miss Watson by generally criticizing the role of the State Department and the Embassy in their handling of Congressman Ryan's briefings, and of the situation in Jonestown. After having read the masses of documents on Jonestown provided to the HIRC by the Department of State, he believed one could have concluded from the information available that Jonestown was a real trouble spot and that more should have been done. He tended to agree with Jackie Speier that the Congressman had not been as deeply briefed as he could have been. In discussing Georgetown's 1815 which asked the Department if the Embassy could prompt the GOG to pay more critical attention to Jonestown, Schollaert said the message was so carefully worded as to have almost solicited the narrow, legal, negative reply which was forthcoming.

Miss Watson explained to Schollaert the limitations that Embassies had to respect in their dealings with local Americans. These restrictions stemmed from the First Amendment, and the Privacy and Freedom of Information Acts. Consular officers are in no sense investigators and they could not initiate the sort of action Schollaert seemed to recommend without clear evidence that crimes were being committed. Schollaert said two things should have suggested to the Embassy that something criminal was going on: 1) Debbie Blakey's statements to Dick McCoy, and 2) a statement made

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Miss Watson replied the

Classification Authorized by:
Deputy Secretary
RDS - 1 & 3: April 2, 1987

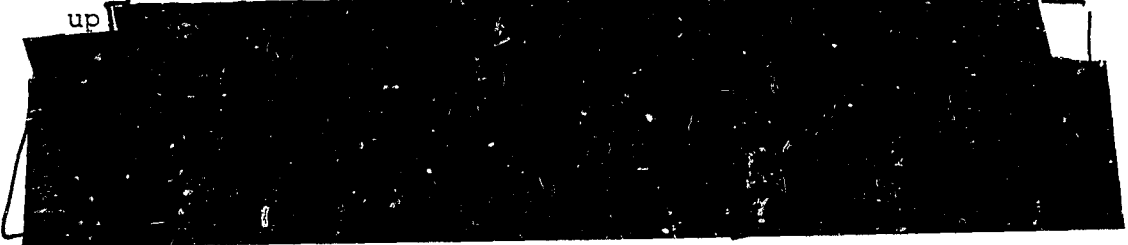
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Embassy had helped that defector leave Jonestown just as it had helped Debbie Blakey do so. It had also followed up



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It was again pointed out to Schollaert the Embassy could only act if really convincing evidence of criminal action were available. The USG had to consider that 75 consular interviews had taken place in which specific allegations of maltreatment had been pursued. Every case proved negative. This was a persuasive body of negative evidence when placed against the accusations that had been made against Jonestown.

Schollaert said he doubted the Congress would let an issue as tragic and dramatic as Jonestown pass. There was a good deal of pressure that the USG should have done something, and this pressure would become greater as California representatives continue to hear from their constituents.

Miss Watson said Congress had written the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts, and these were interpreted by lawyers and the courts. Consuls could not act on their instincts or some notion of equity. If they did not comply with the law they could be sued and could risk a fine or imprisonment. High-ranking people from the Watergate era were still in prison for not having respected our laws. If the Congress were to modify the law, Consuls would work by something else. But could any legislation moves be made in that direction without stirring up reactions from other segments of the public?

Schollaert remarked the Embassy did not have a good reputation for being helpful to visiting newsmen. He could cite only the case of two newsmen who had been refused admission on arrival without visas in Georgetown and deported. Miss Watson reminded him how the Embassy had obtained Guyanese permission for some of the newsmen accompanying Congressman Ryan to enter the country although they had no visas and one was found to be violating the Guyanese currency laws.

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LEADS

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Schollaert also informed Miss Watson he had heard that Jackie Speier might run for Congressman Ryan's seat. He concluded if she would have the physical strength for a campaign.

Schollaert said Dick McCoy had handled himself well during his 12 hours of discussions with HIRC staff members. Schollaert had not personally taken part in these hearings; he had been so close to the issue and the Committee's Staff Director thought the exchanges would seem more objective if he were not to attend. Schollaert did not think there would be formal Committee hearings on Jonestown, but confirmed there would be at least one more wrap-up session with McCoy by the Committee Staff.

Miss Watson, in leaving the Club, asked Schollaert to call her if he had any further questions on any aspect of the Jonestown issue, be they policy questions or of small detail.

Comment: Schollaert is a former FSO who has served in Moscow and Vienna.

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cc: CA - Miss Watson ✓
Mr. Carpenter
Mr. Gise, OCS

CA: ~~HR~~oran:rem